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CIA'S Defense

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Inclusions of cloak-and-dagger Your Mea will show that

Editor, The Star-Free Press: R. Villaverde (Letters, May 29), has sound cause to criticize those responsible for the "invasion" fiasco in Cuba. But he has neither reason nor right to state that the Central Intelligence Agency is "made up exclusively of idiots 100 percent inefficient." Far too many honorable, dedicated, gallant men have worked and are working with efficiency. I doubt if he or I could hope to equal, under pressures and perils I at least would rather not endure — in his defense as much as in mine — for this reckless insult to pass unchallenged.

Undoubtedly, certain CIA operatives guessed wrong, or were misled, or suffered from

"Free Cuba" commitments that properly should be given or withheld only by highest Washington authority. No secret bureau in history, anywhere on earth, has been proof against personnel errors of commission and omission. But on the uncontroversible record, the faceless rang-and-flame of CIA have earned this nation's respectful gratitude, time after time.

For four years, until the still-clouded Francis Powers incident, CIA's U2 survey flights over Soviet Russia added up to one of the most successful intelligence coups of all time. When Khrushchev repudiated Stalin, it was CIA that got the text of his new plan for Communist world-conquest. Rudolf Abel, the Red spy-master in the United States, was yanked out from under-cover by CIA — not by the FBI. We get more truth out of Communist China than Mac Tse-tung and Chou En-lai can bear indefinitely, from CIA's volunteers — who get no medals for bravery beyond the line of duty, and risk death every moment of their lives.

Suppose we take a second look at Cuba. Our military intelligence is, or ought to be, on the job in every sensitive area including Castroland. Our Navy base at Guantanamo is, or is supposed to be, a lookout listening post almost on Castro's doorstep. If military intelligence knew CIA was wrong, did General Staff fulfill its function by playing Pilate, washing its hands of responsibility for what we are now asked to believe the Pentagon knew was bound to happen? If military intelligence did not know, why not? A general is investigating CIA. Who investigates the generals?

Consider Korea. General Carter Magruder, speaking as if he were pro-consul, ordered the revolutionary government to get out or take the consequences. Almost simultaneously, mysterious "leaks" blamed CIA for "not knowing a revolution was going to take place." Anybody on station in Korea had known what was coming, for months past. Whose job was it, to avert the coup, if it should have been averted? It was not CIA's.

most forceful opposition came from the armed services. They will also show, I believe, that uninformed experts in information evaluation peddled journalism not high when they were doing the shots. Is there sufficient evidence now available to prove they will do better if they get a second chance? And yet is that not exactly what we are moving toward, as long as CIA can be made a scapegoat and the mob throws mud?

I am not defending the policy decisions that led to failure in Cuba. I mean, however, point out that — contrary to more "leaks" whose origin is carefully concealed — the enormous amount of military aid that went down the drain in Laos was controlled by the Pentagon, not by CIA. The black-market scandal in Turkey erupted in spite of, not because of, CIA. And surely, the list of mistakes and wuppas, for which responsibility has not yet been assigned, could be much longer.

Meanwhile, as I write this, there are very lonely Americans in very dangerous places, doing the best they can to collect tiny pieces that may fit somewhere in the enormous jigsaw puzzle that is our problem. 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year in, year out. If they are to avoid the idiocy lies in personal sacrifice — and I wish the country had millions more like them.

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